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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0291
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0549
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0165
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0592
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000152

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SUBJECT: NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL READOUT MARCH 7, 2007

Classified By: DCM Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY:

-- Afghanistan: PermReps and SYG discussed apparent failure to pre-brief the NAC on Operation Achilles, launch with many parties expressing frustration and disappointment. SYG promised to take this issue of poor communication up with SACEUR. The SHAPE Operations Director MG Stein detailed Operation Achilles which is now COMISAF,s main tactical effort. A French CIMIC team will go south for Achilles; Spanish and Italian (RC-W) forces will help as well. The UK and U.S. announced a March 28 joint brief to the NAC on counternarcotics. Germany questions USAID absence from ISAF press conference on Achilles/Kajaki dam and Ambassador Nuland explained why USAID did not participate.

-- Kosovo: ASYG Pardew updated NAC on status process and NATO-EU technical talks. Ambassador Nuland briefed on A/S Fried,s visit to Belgrade.

-- Periodic Mission Review (PMR) Reform: SYG noted broad support by PermReps for proposals to reform the Periodic Mission Review (PMR) process and said he would reissue the proposals soon for NAC approval.

END SUMMARY.

Afghanistan

12. (C) Preempting the NAC, SYG de Hoop Scheffer kicked off discussion on Afghanistan by expressing concern that NMAs had not adequately briefed him or the Council prior to the high-profile March 6 press conference announcing the launch of ISAF,s Operation Achilles in Helmand province. Specifically, the SYG felt he had not been adequately informed as to when the operation would begin. He stated he would raise with SACEUR the need to find the right balance in communication between NMAs and the NAC. Many PermReps made clear they felt ISAF,s public announcement of Achilles had blindsided them. The French PermRep (who told us he was speaking on instruction from Paris) again brought up MOD

Alliot-Marie,s intervention at Seville calling for greater political oversight of military operations. Spain, Germany, Norway, and Belgium piled on, though all agreed the NAC should not manage ISAF operations. The UK cautiously concurred, respecting the need to balance info sharing with operational security. Ambassador Nuland regretted that NMAs had not worked with the NAC to enable Ambassadors to serve as force multipliers with capitals and press; all the same, Operation Achilles had received good coverage in U.S. papers.

13. (C) The SYG reminded Ambassadors that on March 12 he would host a coffee for Afghan Parliament Speaker Qanuni, and that the March 13 PermReps, lunch discussion would focus on Afghanistan. He had also spoken to the Qatari Crown Prince over the weekend, and Qatar had decided to allow the ISAF cell at USCENTCOM,s combined air operations center in Doha to remain in-country an additional ninety days while negotiations continued.

14. (C) In his ops brief, SHAPE J3 MG Stein stated that Operation Achilles was now COMISAF,s main tactical effort. Achilles aims to disrupt insurgent activity in Helmand between Gereshk and Kajaki, setting enduring conditions for the sustained development of the Kajaki dam and in support of the GOA. The ISAF theater task force, long a CJSOR shortfall and now filled by the U.S., became fully operational on March 1 and is seeing action. Italian and Spanish forces in RC-W are part of the operation, and the French CIMIC unit will soon deploy to RC-S in support of Achilles. Stein assured PermReps that COMISAF had factored in lessons from last year,s Operation Medusa, and was working to implement a comprehensive approach to ensure stability following kinetic

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operations; 1000 ANP and 800 auxiliary police have been factored into planning, and NATO was taking great care to avoid civilian casualties, including through information ops such as leaflet drops. MG Stein stressed that Op Achilles is but one tactical set out of several that will comprise the pan-theater Operation Now Ruz (briefed several times to the NAC). Taking Ambassadors, comments on board about information flow between SHAPE and the NAC, he reminded that COMISAF does not have an ironclad schedule by which he launches these tactical sets and that the decision to launch is based on constantly evolving factors.

15. (C) On NATO training teams for the ANA (OMLTs), of 69 needed, 17 are fielded and three are in the pipeline. In response to a question from Ambassador Nuland, MG Stein noted that SHAPE is working on an initiative that will seek to make fielding training teams less burdensome for Allies. On NATO,s equipment support to the ANA, Stein noted that a large portion of the ANA,s small arms and ammo needs for the year have been met, but key shortfalls included armored personnel vehicles and funds to transport pending donations from Europe to Afghanistan.

16. (C) During discussion, the UK and U.S. noted our intent to brief the NAC on counternarcotics on March 28. In light of the UNODC,s recent winter survey on poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, UK Ambassador Eldon pointed to some positive indicators: twelve provinces are expected to be poppy-free in 2007; eradication is active in thirteen provinces; and with several weeks left, current efforts are showing more progress already than aggregate 2006 results.

17. (C) Ambassador Nuland praised the participation of French, Italian, and Spanish units in Operation Achilles, and encouraged the SYG to have his Senior Civilian Rep in Kabul provide the NAC with information on reconstruction and development, plus political elements of Operations Achilles and Now Ruz. The German PermRep questioned the last-minute withdrawal of USAID from an ISAF press conference highlighting Operation Achilles, goal to provide security for the Kajaki dam project. Ambassador Nuland noted that the

USG had believed that raising Afghans, expectations in the short-term over a project that will take years to develop was a tactical error, and had made the decision to cancel USAID participation in this particular event. (Comment: Some Allies, without all the facts, likely viewed this as U.S. failure to support the &comprehensive approach8 Secretary Rice unveiled at NATO HQ on January 26. To address this concern we are circulating an excellent fact sheet on US Assistance to Afghanistan provided by Embassy Kabul. End Comment.)

Kosovo

¶8. (C) ASYG Pardew updated the NAC on the status process and his participation in high-level talks between parties on the security aspects of UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari,s proposal. He said the final round of consultations with both parties has been completed. There will be a high level meeting on March 10 so both parties can present final comments on the proposal. On the security aspects, Pristina, while unhappy with the &disbanding8 of the KPC, largely accepted the proposal, while the Serbs opposed anything but a completely demilitarized Kosovo.

¶9. (SBU) ASYG Pardew then gave an update on the status of the ongoing technical discussions between NATO and the EU, including the most recent March 2 meeting. Pardew said that both organizations continue their work on the draft technical agreement documents and are planning to shift to a joint drafting session next week. The drafts should be completed and ready for review by the end of March. One item that has been identified that will require further work is NATO,s coordinating relationship with the international civilian representative (ICR), specifically KFOR support to the ICR

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during extreme national emergencies. In response to the SYG,s inquiry on NAC input into the process, Pardew responded that once both organizations at the staff level feel the draft documents are in an mutually acceptable form, they will be presented for NAC consideration and approval. The French PermRep noted that, as the EU ESDP mission was dependent on a UNSCR, there should be no exchange of letters between the NATO SYG and EU High Representative before passage of a UNSCR. Ambassador Nuland urged the SYG and SACEUR to continue to take up with the EU High Representative the issue of force levels and ensuring no security gap between UNMIK and the ESDP mission.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Nuland briefed PermReps on Assistant Secretary Fried,s March 5-6 visit to Belgrade, stating that

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the purpose was to focus Serbia beyond Kosovo and onto a path to a NATO-EU future. During his meeting with President Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica, A/S Fried urged them to go to Vienna with practical amendments.

Periodic Mission Review (PMR) Reform

¶11. (SBU) The SYG noted that at the March 6 coffee, proposals for reform of the PMR process had received broad support from PermReps in principle, but that some PermReps still required further consultations with their capitals. The SYG will consult further with delegations and reissue the proposals, incorporating additional ideas, under a new document for NAC approval.

NULAND